

REVIEWS OF RECENT BOOKS

Schallmeyer, W. *Eugenik, Lebenshaltung und Auslese.*

(Abstracted and adapted from the *Zeitschrift für Socialwissenschaft*, May—July, 1908, Leipzig.)

ALTHOUGH Prof. Pearson is too optimistic when he hopes that twenty years hence every University will have put Eugenics among the subjects of its syllabus, it is obvious that in all countries within recent years the questions of Degeneracy and Eugenics have grown in importance, especially from the sociological point of view. This increase in importance has, however, its drawbacks. Sociological problems are liable to be taken up by party-politicians. These men do not care so much for eugenic ideals in themselves as for making party-capital out of them. A young growth like Eugenics, however, needs tender hands and unselfish nurses.

The scientific development of any problem usually suffers when it is drawn into the whirlpool of politics. There, more than anywhere else, volition governs cognition. Supremacy of the Intellect over the Will is, however, absolutely necessary for all real research.

The Socialists especially are active in distorting the Eugenic problem, so as to make good party-capital out of it. Their pseudo-eugenic teaching, based upon very superficial perceptions, is an obstacle impeding the way towards the removal and prophylaxis of racial degeneracy and the attainment of racial improvement. If they say, that the Eugenic problem can be understood only from the point of view of a struggle between masses and classes; that without higher wages, shorter hours, and better housing Eugenic knowledge is of little worth; that the economic and political aims of Social-Democracy represent the true racial hygienic formulæ of our times; then this assertion of theirs is nothing more than a *petitio principii*: that which is still to be investigated is already assumed as a postulate. First of all the conditions of racial degeneracy and its prophylaxis must be thoroughly studied in order to arrive at that—or, indeed, any other result: a study which most orthodox Socialists consider superfluous.

For the racial process, all such items as wage-standard, hours of labour, and housing, are by no means so important as these people want us to believe. Certain opinions, valuations, customs, and social conditions of the community play a much more important rôle. Frequency of celibacy, whether voluntary or involuntary; marriage-age within different classes and callings; frequency of great difference of age between the contracting parties; number of offspring considered desirable; adoption and spread of artificial means for the prevention of conception within different classes; motives leading to marriage; the extent to which personal qualities or possessions influence choice; consumption of alcohol and narcotics; spread of venereal diseases; how many mothers nurse their children and for how long;—these and other considerations bear very closely on national Eugenics, and they have little or nothing to do with the struggle between masses and classes. We find more mothers suckling their infants in poor districts than in well-to-do ones. Neo-Malthusian habits, which are so often quoted as causes of degeneracy, are much more prevalent in the better-off classes. The real Eugenic problems, therefore, cannot be reduced to the antithesis between wealth and poverty. National Eugenics is an ideal. It does not collide with any class interests. As an ideal it asks small sacrifices from all classes and promises a reward—in the future: permanence and increase of racial efficiency.

The apostles of the Pan-Teutonic gospel bring about by their efforts another misdirection of our problem. They fix the racial value of any nation by its percentage of pure Teutonic elements. According to them, the earth is ruled by those nations which show a high percentage of such elements. And within these nations the most successful classes are those with the highest percentage. The ideal of these Northern Race enthusiasts is, therefore, a selection *en bloc*, a suppression of nations of the Alpine and Mediterranean races; or at least prevention of intermarriages between high- and low-percentaged nations within the Teutonic race.

But all that is impracticable. Perhaps not one individual can claim to belong absolutely to one race. The population of Europe is an intermingling of at least three races. Besides, the crossing of races not too distant in consanguinity often yields better results than does pure breeding even within a noble race.

Whereas with these Pan-Teutonic dreamers environment is really a negligible quantity, the Socialists put an undue stress upon

it. They deny heritable excellence in individuals and races. To them the Eugenic problem is merely one of political economy. In misery and hunger Darwin saw the means of natural selection and racial perfection; they maintain that if these were removed all would be perfect.

Nearly all the socialistic writers, and many others besides, continue to hold these tenets. Herkner and Hutchison in England, Kautsky, Nordau, and Sombart in Germany, are such writers. Hutchison went so far as to say, that given into his hands the management of feeding the individual up to the eighteenth year, he would guarantee a satisfactory race (see *Sociol. Pap.*, Vol. I., London, 1905, p. 58). They overlook the fact that the possibilities of individual development are already definitely pre-determined during the amphimixis, by the combination of paternal and maternal elements of inheritance, and, that if such elements have through this individual combination once been doomed to remain latent, they cannot be brought to develop by any environment, however favourable.

We do not say that national Eugenics should use misery and hunger as selective means—no!—but we doubt whether the misery of the masses be the *cause* of the degeneracy of the masses. This latter assertion presupposes that in former times, especially in times prehistoric, the environment was on the whole more favourable than that of most of the industrial people at the present day. But never before was mankind better housed and better fed than now.

We do not deny that the still often unfavourable housing of the lower and middle classes—the only two classes worth considering as to numerical value of offspring—has indirectly some injurious influence upon the germ-plasm. Yet, look at the middle ages with their insanitary houses and bad feeding; look at that primitive age when men for thousands of years lived in stuffy unventilated caves, full of refuse and dirt, with the added dangers of propinquity when infectious diseases raged! Why did man survive at all? Because environmental influences determine much more the individual or ontogenetic than the generative or phylogenetic development. If through thousands of years of unfavourable environment each successive generation were to have been, even infinitesimally, inferior to the preceding one, mankind would have long ago been extinct. Out of this *cul-de-sac* into which some of us have been led by our beloved and over-rated theory of environment, there is no other escape than by the practice of deliberate, purposive selection.

Individuals are born with great differences of constitution. In any given environment those whose inherited constitution is feebler will fall victims to diseases which others will escape. The more unhygienic the environment, the sooner illness develops in individuals with a pre-disposition to it, and thus they cannot escape an early elimination. In this way natural selection at one time prevented an increase of degeneracy and effected a balance between racial power of resistance and environment. As soon, however, as the environment improves, the more weakly disposed individuals manage to survive, to reach the reproductive age, and so lower the average quality of the population. On the other hand, an unfavourable environment rather raises the average quality by allowing the propagation of the best individuals only.

We have said that party-politics and other heterogeneous tendencies cloud the problem of racial improvement and racial degeneracy. But it suffers much more under the uncertainty as to what is to be understood by these two terms. Only the science of Genetics can here give authoritative definitions. Ignorance still sways the majority of our writers on the subject. With the exception of a few experts, even medical men and hygienists lack the training necessary for dealing with it, and even the consciousness of this lack. Many of them do not distinguish between *heritable* and *not heritable*. They fail to realise that every physical or psychical quality is the product of the inheritance-factor *and* the environment-factor. We know the difficulty of investigating a given case with respect to the proportion of these two factors in the individual organism. Nevertheless, it has to be done. Nobody acquainted with the present state of Genetics can believe that all changes of the individual organism caused through environment run parallel with changes of the germ-plasm.

The influences the environment exercises on the germ-plasm we will call exogeneous. These are absolutely different from the endogeneous variations of the germ-plasm, which latter variations take place with the new combination of the elements of inheritance at the moment of amphimixis, and during the pre-conceptive stage of maturing ovum and sperm.

The endogeneous variations occur fluctuatingly as long as they are insignificant and indifferent, but they are favoured by selection if of value for the preservation of the race or the individual. The exogeneous variations, on the other hand, do not seem to be of long

continuance. Racial degeneration and progress towards racial perfection are phylogenetic processes and accordingly impossible without the agency of the germ-plasm. Only heritable characteristics are of value for the qualitative racial process. And the scientific concept of Race comprises only and solely heritable qualities contained in the germ-plasm.

In order to decide how far environmental influences on the qualities of an organism are heritable, we will divide them into three groups: (1) mechanical influences causing mutilations and scars; (2) the physiological effect of the use or non-use of different organs; (3) alimential influences. In the third group two sub-divisions are obvious: (a) influences arising from the degree and sufficiency of food; (b) toxic influences on the germ-plasm.

Without doubt (1) leaves the germ-plasm unaltered; (2) has scarcely any perceptible influence; (3a) has little, if any, whilst (3b) has great influence. Germs from badly-fed persons retain their normal tendency to development, so that under the most favourable environment they do not yield a worse result than if they had come from normal persons. All observations we can make upon the theory here propounded lead to the conclusion that the germ-plasm, and consequently the phylogenesis or the genetic development, remains on the whole untouched by the manifold influences which co-determine the course and the result of the ontogenesis, *i.e.*, the individual development. The environment has only indirect influence by its selecting power; it determines which types are to be favoured and to survive. Hence it is only through a selective birth-rate that the perfecting of the race becomes possible.

We come now to the question of how we are to recognise whether there are symptoms of ascent or descent in the generative development of a population. According to the view here set forth, either case can be stated only with respect to the increased or decreased total average value of the germ-plasms of a given group of persons. At present almost insuperable difficulties are encountered in the attempt to formulate by any statistical methods the increments of such practically independent variables. The differentials of the dependent variables (ontogenetic increments) are often erroneously taken as those of the independent ones (phylogenetic increments). At any rate, statistical observations ought to extend over many generations. Many authors disregard this. They consider increase of height, or average age, increase of births, decrease of mortality, as evidence for ascent.

This is a mistake ; for these items are very often only the outcome of bettered hygienic environmental conditions ; indeed, by keeping alive feebler individuals they may be concurrent with decadence. Intentional sterility is by no means always a sign of physical degeneration, but may be the effect of social opinions and circumstances.

To put the views of our author in a very few words. Socialists and Social Reformers are right in aiming at the betterment of the environment, for this enables the qualities of a good germ-plasm to develop. But Eugenists are also right in laying greater stress on the betterment of the innate germ-plasm itself, and this can only be effected by breeding from sound and healthy stocks. Accordingly, statesmen and philanthropists alike should turn their attention in both these directions, and we should all lend them our support by striving to look beyond the immediate present and to regard the interests of future generations as equal, if not superior, to our own.

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Saleeby, CALEB WILLIAMS, M.D. *Parenthood and Race Culture : An Outline of Eugenics*. Cassell & Co. ; London, 1909 ; pp. xiv. + 331.

ALL the world has been celebrating the centenary of the birth of Charles Darwin and the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *The Origin of Species*, but it is perhaps the finest celebration to apply Darwinism to human life to-day, which is in a word what Dr. Saleeby has so well done. It is true that there have been various attempts since 1859 to make Darwinism influential in practice as well as in thought, but in spite of these there has been a general reluctance to realise that "selection for parenthood," which is the central idea of Darwinism, is more than a doctrine for biological disputation. We should remember, too, that the reasonable ideal of marriage and parenthood which the book before us expresses, has been cherished for ages by thousands of wholesome men and women (especially in the country)—Darwinians without knowing it, because as gardeners and farmers and so forth they were close to the facts of life—who probably never thought of it in so many words. But since things and not ideas have got into the saddle and have ridden mankind, since to mechanisms and mechanical conceptions there has been ceded the place that belongs to organisms and organic conceptions, there has been necessarily a growing blindness to the realities of life. We hope that Dr. Saleeby will be more successful than most of his predecessors,